

**Guidance on Determining Categorical Eligibility for
Runaway, Homeless and Migrant Youth**

Purpose:

This instruction sets forth the policy on the operation of programs under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA, Public Law (P.L.) 108-96) and eligibility guidance for schools and school districts.

Scope:

Sponsors participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or School Breakfast Program (SBP).

Description:

Background on the Grant Programs Established under the RHYA

The Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) is part of the Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) of the Department of Health and Human Services. FYSB supports local communities in providing services and opportunities to young people, particularly runaway and homeless youth. FYSB does so by awarding funding that enables community agencies to offer services to young people and their families and to test new approaches to helping youth. FYSB promotes and supports youth through its three grant programs: Basic Center Program, Transitional Living Program and the Street Outreach Program. The agencies receiving grants under these three programs are referred to as either FYSB grantees or Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) service providers.

FYSB works through ten ACYF regional offices located throughout the country; each region has a Regional Youth Specialist to serve the States, territories, tribes and other flexibility in guiding the program and financial management of FYSB programs.

The 2003 Reauthorization of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program directed FYSB to coordinate the school district liaisons under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to assure that RHY are provided information about the educational services available to them and to ensure they receive support services guaranteed under the law. In order to better advance FYSB's directive on coordination with McKinney-Vento school district liaison, they are developing an information memorandum for their grantees that offers suggestions on how to build stronger relationships with the liaisons and offers available resources.

Documenting Eligibility

The systems for coordination of information about RHY can vary from State to State and even across districts depending on the relationship between the McKinney-Vento school district liaison and the RHY service provider, and the size of the RHY caseload. In many cases, the McKinney-Vento school district liaison is already working with the youth receiving services under the RHY grant programs. In these cases, school districts will be notified of a child's status as a runaway through the existing liaison channels. In some cases, schools may receive information on a youth's participation in RHY program directly from the RHY provider. Documentation to substantiate free meal eligibility must consist of the youth's name, or a list of names, effective date(s), and the signature of the McKinney-Vento school district liaison or the RHY services provider(s). This documentation is acceptable in lieu of a free and reduced-price meal application.

It is important that schools/school districts become familiar with their local RHY service providers and their McKinney-Vento school district liaison in order to facilitate the service of free schools meals for youth in these programs. Questions regarding the operation of FYSB may be directed to your Regional Youth Specialist. For further information on FYSB you may want to view their web site at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/>.

SOURCE: USDA MEMORANDUM, DATED SEPTEMBER 24, 2005.